



The PEN Parent Empowerment Newsletter

Department of Social Services

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May 2008

Our Newsletter

Welcome to the third edition of The **P**arenting **E**mpowerment **N**ewsletter!

This newsletter is intended to help educate, support and connect foster, adoptive, resource, kinship families and all those who care for and support the youth in San Luis Obispo County!

The newsletter will be published quarterly. If you are interested in submitting an article for publication or would like to join our mailing list, please contact Gina Cindrich at 781-1776.

Finding Permanency for Youth, by Summer Frappier and Katie McCain

Today in California, and to some degree nationwide, the methodology of “permanency” – a customized effort to establish and nurture permanent, caring relationships between young people and supportive adults – is a primary component of child welfare best practice. Permanency for foster youth means having an adult who consistently states and demonstrates that s/he has entered an unconditional life-long parent-like relationship with the youth. The youth agrees that the adult will play this role in his/her life. Permanency is not independent living or long term foster care.

San Luis Obispo County is committed to the mission of permanency, and is dedicated to ensuring that every youth in foster care will have at least one committed relationship with an adult. This identified adult will support the youth through all aspects of life, even after the age of 18. “Former foster youth repeatedly state that a life long connection and a relationship with a supportive

and committed adult, related by blood or not, is one of the key factors associated with their resilience and the single greatest impact on their ability to navigate the transition to adulthood” (CPYP 2005).

Every year in California 4,000 youth age out of the foster care system and statistics show 51% will be unemployed. Perhaps even more devastating, 50 % of these young people will be homeless within 18 months. **WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PREVENT THIS TRAGEDY?**

As foster/resource parents you are privileged with the opportunity to touch each and every youth's life you come in contact with. You have the chance to decide if *you* can commit to a life-long parent-like relationship or you can play an important part in helping the youth in your life *find* that one committed adult. We encourage you to speak to your youth about the people in his/her life that you support, encourage and believe in them.

The Independent Living Program has two Permanency Case Managers dedicated to assuring that no youth leave the foster care system without a committed relationship with at least one caring adult. For more information please contact:

Summer Frappier, Permanency Case Manager, sfrappier@co.slo.ca.us; 781-1920;
Katie McCain, Permanency Case Manager, kmccain@co.slo.ca.us; 781-1754

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From the Desk of the Recruitment and Retention Coordinator

By: Gina Cindrich

Hello and Happy Spring!

It has been a busy time for recruitment~ Among some of the many projects currently underway for Recruitment include our Informational Outreach Sessions that continue monthly throughout the county. These meetings provide basic information to those interested in doing foster care or in adoption. Many thanks to Beverly Johnson, Christine Rodriguez, Kitty Hoffman and Franchelle Ellison for being available at these meetings, for sharing their stories and providing information to prospective parents.

We will continue to offer these sessions monthly to raise awareness for the need for foster homes and for the youth in our community! Please invite someone

you know that is considering adoption or foster care! Information on upcoming "IOS" meetings is on our Event's calendar and is open to the public. No RSVP is required and no commitment to become a foster or adoptive parent is required!

Thank you to all who have submitted articles to the PEN. I have received many wonderful articles as well as positive comments about the articles printed. In the last edition the article written by a twelve year old entitled, "*The Day I Said Goodbye*" received a great deal of praise and appreciation. Please let me again encourage anyone who has a story or experience they would like to share to submit an article. You never know when your experience might be of benefit to

others!

This is the main purpose of the PEN. To share, support and stay connected! I know everyone has something to contribute to that goal! I hope that you might be willing to share what you have with others. If you decide you would like to, please email me your idea, article or suggestion to gcindrich@co.slo.ca.us

I look forward to hearing from you!
Gina



Talking About Your Child's Personal Safety: Beginning the Conversation

*From: The San Luis Obispo County Child Abuse Prevention Council
Provider of Talking About Touching Services*

Making your home a safe place and being aware of your children's environment when you are not with them are critical steps that you can take to protect your children from sexual abuse. Another vital step that you can take is to talk with them about touching and private body parts. This might not be the easiest subject to bring up with a child. You might feel uncomfortable or embarrassed talking with your children about sexuality or touching. These are common feelings. It is often hard to know what to say. Here are some tips to get you started.

Make touching safety part of your family's safety rules.

One way to make it easier to talk about touching is to discuss it in the context of safety. Touching is a safety issue just like crossing the street or playing with matches. Create and teach family safety rules about touching just as you would teach others.

Some typical family safety rules are:

- § Never play with matches. (Fire safety)
- § Always go in the water with an adult. (Water safety)
- § Look both ways and listen before you cross the street. (Walking safety)
- § Always wear a seat belt. Always sit in your booster seat. (Car safety)
- § Always wear a helmet when riding your bike. (Bike safety)

These rules should also include the "always ask first" rule. Touching safety can be taught along with the above family safety rules. Talking about personal safety in a sensitive and age-appropriate way with your children will not frighten them; it will

give them skills and knowledge to use throughout their lives. You can begin teaching touching safety rules to children as soon as they are able to understand, even if they can't talk.

Take advantage of everyday moments.

Children learn by asking questions, so a good way to talk about touching safety is to be open to questions and comments. If you're open and respond in a way that keeps the conversation going, you can turn a child's unexpected comment or question into a wonderful learning opportunity. Be sure to vary your responses according to the age of your child.

Here are some situations that present natural teaching opportunities:

- § Bath or bedtime. When children are young and still need help with dressing and bathing, it's not unusual for them to ask the names of private body parts. Experts recommend that parents teach the correct names for private body parts, along with the names of other parts of the child's body. This normalizes the discussion and enables children to use actual words to use to describe their private body parts and to tell about abuse if it happens.
- § Before a child goes out, especially without you. Routinely go over safety rules, including rules about touching, before your family or child goes on an outing. Ask, "What are some of our safety rules about walking?" and "What are our safety rules about touching?"

Revisit the conversation.

Just like crossing the street safely, talking about touching safety is not a one-time conversation. Children need frequent reminders and practice of all family safety rules. The only way to ensure that your children are learning the rules and skills to keep them safe is to talk them over and practice together during normal family activities.

Don't let embarrassment or nervousness get in the way of talking to your children about touching safety. Find a way that works for you and begin the conversation.

For more information about the **San Luis Obispo County Child Abuse Prevention Council** and the **Talking About Touching** program visit our website at www.slocap.org or call 543-6216

Notes From the Public Health Nurse

By Lisa Willis and Dayna Ravalin

Health Care Program for Children in Foster Care

WIC for Foster Children

This is just a reminder that all children in foster care are eligible to receive services from the WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) Program. For eligibility purposes the foster child is considered a family of one and foster care payments are considered the foster child's sole income. Foster children are eligible for WIC services up to age five.

WIC services include:

- Nutrition and health information to help families eat well and be healthy.
- Coupons to buy healthy foods such as milk, eggs, juice, cheese, cereal, peanut butter and iron fortified infant formula.
- Referrals to other community services.

WIC offices are located in Atascadero, Cambria, Grover Beach, Morro Bay, Nipomo, Paso Robles and San Luis Obispo. For more information or to schedule a WIC appointment contact the WIC office closest to your home: San Luis Obispo and coastal areas 781-5570, north county 237-3065, south county 473-7130. If you get a recording please leave a brief message and the WIC staff will return your call at their earliest opportunity.

Small Changes Families Can Make to Eat Better and Be More Active:

Contributed by Dayna Ravalin, RD, CDE, Public Health Nutritionist, County of SLO.

1. Get up and play.
Children need 60 minutes of physical activity daily.
2. Decrease screen time.
No more than 1-2 hours of TV, computers, and video games per day.
3. Eat more fruits and vegetables
Try to add one or two choices per meal and snacks.
4. Drink more water and low fat milk.
Limit sodas and sugary drinks.
5. Eat breakfast everyday.
Include at least one serving of fruit.
6. Watch portions.
Remember "child size" is not "adult size"!

National Infant Immunization Week April 2008

The week of April 19-26, 2008 is an annual observance to highlight the importance of protecting infants and help ensure that they are fully immunized against 14 vac-

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cine-preventable diseases. Infants are particularly vulnerable to infectious diseases; that is why it is critical to protect them through immunization.

This is a good time to remember to always take your child's Health and Education Passport, which includes the immunizations, with you to doctor appointments so the immunization status can be evaluated. Also remember to take a Healthcare Encounter form with you so we can update the passport with any new information. Without the immunization history the child may either fail to receive needed vaccines or receive unnecessary ones because the doctor cannot adequately assess their status.

For more information on vaccines a

good resource is the CDC (Centers for Disease Control) website:

<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/>

There are many links there to questions about vaccines, recommendations and guidelines, information regarding reports about autism and vaccines including an informative "In the Spotlight" article on Vaccine Safety dated March 6th, 2008.

The San Luis Obispo Public Health Department also has good information on their website for the local Immunization Program, contact information, and additional links with information on vaccine safety:

<http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/health/publichealth/immunization.htm>

I want to offer my appreciation for all of the work that you do to enhance the health and well being of the children in your care. Please feel free to contact me for any questions, or any assistance needed with locating medical or dental providers. Lisa (781-1934).



Calendar of Upcoming Events

Pride Sessions: (To RSVP-please contact Charlene Hite, at 781-1728 at least one week prior to each session to reserve your place.)

June Session:

Thursday, June 12, 2008- 6:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.
 Saturday, June 14, 2008- 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
 Thursday, June 19, 2008- 6:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.
 Saturday, June 21, 2008- 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
 Thursday, June 26, 2008- 6:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.
 Saturday, June 28, 2008- 9:00 a.m. -4:00 p.m.

July Session:

Thursday, July 10, 2008- 6:00 p.m.-9:00p.m.
 Saturday, July 12, 2008- 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
 Thursday, July 17, 2008-6:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.
 Saturday, July 19, 2008- 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.
 Thursday, July 24, 2008-6:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.
 Saturday, July 26, 2008- 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.

Kids Flea Market-

June 28, 2008
 Paso Robles Downtown Park
 9:00AM to 3:00PM

Pecho Ranch Day-A day of Spinning, Quilting, Whittling, and Flin Knapping Demonstrations; Authentic Victorian Characters,

Home-baked Bread with Fresh Preserves and "Spooner History Walk" Call (805) 528-0513 for information.
 July 5, 2008
 Moñtana de Oro
 11:00AM to 2:00PM

Informational Outreach Sessions— Informational tutorial on Foster Care and Adoption. Open to anyone and everyone who is interested. Admission is free. No RSVP required.

June 9, 2008
 Department of Social Services
 3433 South Higuera Room 115
 San Luis Obispo, CA 93401
 6:30PM-8:30PM

July 8, 2008
 Department of Social Services
 3433 South Higuera Room 115
 San Luis Obispo, CA 93401
 6:30PM-8:30PM